The Abbeville

BY W. A. LEE AND HUGH WILSON. ABBEVILLE

LIFE AT THE POLE.

The bears, wandering continually through the night, must needs have a hard struggle to live. During the summer, the seals, which furnish their only subsistence, crawl upon the ice and are easily caught; but in the winter they only resort to the cracks to breathe, and in doing so, barely put their noses above the water, so that they are taken with difficulty. Driven to desperation by hunger, the bears often will invade the haunts of man, in search of the food which their quick sense has detected.

I had an adventure, about this time, which shows that the Polar bear is not so ferocious as is generally supposed; indeed, they have never been known to attack man except when hotly pursued and driven to close quarters. Strolling, one day, along the shore, I was observing, with much interest, the effect of the recent spring tides upon the ice foot, when rounding a point of land, I suddenly found myself confronted in the faint moonlight by an enormous bear. He had just sprung down from the land ice, and was meeting me at a full trot. We caught sight of each other at the same instant. Being without a rifle or other means of defense, I wheeled suddenly to the ship, with, I fancy, much the same reflections about discretion and valor as those which crossed the mind of old Jack Falstaff when the Douglass set upon him; but finding, after a few lengthy strides, that I was not gobbled up, I looked back over my shoulder, when, as much to my surprise as gratification, I saw the bear tearing away toward the open water with a celerity which left no doubt as to the state of his mind. I suppose it would be difficult to determine which was the most frightened—the bear or I.

The troops of foxes about us were at first quite tame; but they had been cured of their familiarity by the lessons learned from the hunters, and had to be approached with adroitness. Of both the blue and white varieties I had living specimens in my cabin. These two varieties of the fox, notwithstanding their many points of resemblance, are evidentally distinct species. I have known them to mix, the coat of each preserving its distinctive hue, that of the blue fox varying merely in distinctive shade, while the white changes only from the pure white to a slightly yellowish tinge. Their skins are much sought after by the trappers of South Greenland, where the animal is rare, for the fur commands a fabulous price in the Copenhagen market.

The tough, nearly hairless hides of the Great Sea Lions, which are about an inch thick, had a singularly iron-plated look about them, particularly suggestive of defense; while their huge tusks, which they brandished with an appearance of strength that their awkwardness did not diminish, looked like very formidable weapons of offense if applied to a boat' splanking or to the human ribs, if one should happen to find himself floundering in the sea among the thick skinned brutes. To complete the hideousness of a facial expression which the tusks render formidable enough in appearance, nature had endowed them with broad flat noses, which are covered all over with stiff whiskers, looking very much like porcupine quills, and extending up to the edge of a pair of gaping nostrils. The use of these whiskers is as obscure as that of the tusks; though it is probable that the latter may be as well weapons of offense and defense as for the most useful purpose of grapping up from the bottom of the sea the mollusks which constitute their principal food. There were two old bulls in the herd, who appeared to be dividing their time between sleeping and jamming their tusks in each other's faces, although they appeared to treat the matter with perfect indifference, as they did not appear to make any impression on each other's thick hides. As we approached, these old fellows—neither of which could have been less than sixteen feet long, nor smaller in girth than a hogshead—raised up their heads, and, after taking a leisurely survey of us, seemed to think us unworthy of further notice; and then punching each other again in the face, fell once more to sleep.

As we jog on toward spring, each hour of the six months' darkness grows a little longer, and soaks a little more color from the blood, and takes a little more from the elasticity of the step, and adds a little more to the lengthened face, and cheeks, little by little, the cheerful laugh and merry jest that came from the hold and cabin; and, without being willing to confess it openly, yet we are all forced to acknowledge to ourselves that the enemy does now and then get the better of us, and that we have often to renew the resolution. The moon light comes and goes again, and the night glistens clear and cold over the white landscape; and memory returns unbidden, to other days that are fled and gone; we miss, in the sparkling air and the still hour of the winter night, the jingling bells, and the sleigh which will always hold one more, and the wayside inn, and the smoking supper that "mine host" serves up, and the crackling blaze of country logs; and then, when we forget the moon and the snow, and the frost, and recal the summer and the sunshine, we remember that "the seat in the shade of the hawthorn bush" is far away.—*Dr. Hayes' Open Polar Sea.*

HOW OLD WE ARE!

The theory, or discovery, as the claim now stands, is being vigorously pushed that man is a veritable "antique." He lived not only thousands, but hundreds of thousands of years ago, and so of course, the Bible narrative crumbles in utter ruins; in fact, everything built upon a Scriptural underpinning totters and falls. A sad state of things truly. To be sure we might suppose that the great geological epochs, such as the glacial period, the times when sundry uncouth animals of inconvenient size might have rendered human life rather problematical, when vegetation was a little too rank for easy or healthful digestion, when mud and water were too deep even for long topped boots, (and Goodyear did not live at that early date), when heat put matters generally into a melting mood, when all things mundane were cooking in a geological porridge, that these would sadly interfere with human life on the globe; but our enthusiastic antiquaries skip such little items as of no consequence.

The famous Swiss lake-dwellings have furnished excellent capital for these theorists. The dwellings are truly remarkable, and from their position, character, and surroundings, it is doubtless correct to ascribe to them great antiquity, but the great question is, do they belong to what are called "pre-historic" times; does their existence prove conclusively that man lived long before the commonly received record? Very plausible arguments were early brought forward in support of this theory, and for a time the advocates had it all their own way. But the tide of evidence is turning, and the latest and most accurate investigation tend in other directions.

The London *Quarterly*, in a recent number, sums up the main issues presented by the facts contained in the most recent and reliable works on this interesting subject. The conclusions reached are briefly these. Whoever these lake-dwellers were, they continued to occupy their settlements in times which are strickly historical, and these settlements were permanent. They are not all of the same era, and the arbitrary and unscientific theory of a stone, a bronze and an iron age, following each other in the construction of these buildings, and in the knowledge and attainments of the inhabitants, is clearly refuted. But the most important conclusion reached is that there is no scientific compulsion which insists upon a very enormous antiquity for the lake-dwellings. Man and mammals *may* have co-existed, but if they did, there is another explanation of the phenomenon than that which carries man back into the dim past a hundred thousand years. A more scientific solution is that the mammals are of more recent date than has been supposed, that their day and generation must be brought *lower down*, and not that the human period must be pushed further back. Troyon says in his work, "Let it be well understood, then, that the stone age, the relics of which are discovered in the lakes and in the graves is recognized in this work as subsequent to the Mosaic deluge."

It is gratifying to find the independent researches of scientific men reaching such conclusions, and we can well afford to wait for scientific fog to blow away. We have no sympathy with those who fear that modern science will overthrow the teachings of the Bible. The Bible can stand the test and will not fall. Let investigation be pressed in every conceivable direction, the more the better; truth will ultimately triumph,

"The eternal years of God are hers;"

science will be found to harmonize with God's written word, and skeptics and false theorists will be utterly confounded in the result of their own studies, for they will find that after all, they have been unconsciously and unintentionally working for his glory for the establishment of his truth, the progress of his cause. It is constantly happening that we are astonished by some discovery, some theory by which the Bible and man's relations to his Creator are to be set aside as absurdities, but thus far they have all come to nought, and God's word still stands. We welcome, therefore, every investigation into the hidden things of nature, although we feel that there is a limit to human study and curiosity, and that oftentimes it will be found that "His ways are past finding out."—*Coug. and Rec.*

MANAGEMENT OF GRAPE VINES.—We would here remind those who are growing grapes, that this is the proper season to lay down long branches for producing future plants, as has been so often recommended in this paper. I raised a number of these last season, and was surprised at the vigor of the plants thus grown, and the close mat of fibrous roots. Without any desire to spoil the trade, I must say that you seldom get such plants out of a nursery as you can raise yourself. Pin a long branch down into a shallow trench, and when all the buds have made a growth of several inches, gradually fill the trench up with earth, checking, by pinching, any disposition of some shoots to outgrow the others.

I agree with B. F. J. in thinking that we imitate European practice too closely in cultivating the grape. Especially do we plant too near, and thin and prune altogether too much. We don't make allowance enough for the difference in the climate. Here we must have shade and a plenty of foliage to maintain a healthy equilibrium with the root; there it may not be of so much importance. I always leave three times as much wood as the books direct, and if the crop of fruit is too heavy, thin it out. Twenty years ago we could easily grow grapes by planting at the foot of large trees, and allowing the vines to run all over them. A friend grew great quantities of Catawba and Isabellas in this way and yearly got two barrels to the vine of what I then thought was the finest and choicest fruit I ever saw. These vines are long since dead, winter-killed. Now we are obliged to cover our plants every winter with earth, even as far south as St. Louis, and are lucky if we get seven or eight pounds of fruit where we once got fully one hundred pounds with much greater ease. Even with these drawbacks, growing the grape is the most profitable branch of Agriculture that we have, and for more than a hundred miles on the Mississippi river banks, it is the most certain crop that is raised.—*B. T., Country Gent.*

In the midst of a stormy discussion a gentleman rose to settle the matter in dispute. Waving his hand majestically over the excited disputants, he began: "Gentleman, all I want is common sense." "Exactly," Jerrold interrupted, that is precisely what *you* want!" The discussion was lost in the burst of laughter.